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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 001129

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: GERMANY/AFGHANISTAN: AMBASSADOR MURPHY'S
INTRODUCTORY CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER JUNG

REF: A. BERLIN 1107
[1](#)B. KABUL 2760

Classified By: DCM GREG DELAWIE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: During a September 14 introductory meeting with Ambassador Murphy, Defense Minister Jung emphasized that the controversy over the September 4 air strikes in Kunduz should not be allowed to disrupt what is a fundamentally excellent bilateral relationship. Jung expressed understanding and support for COMISAF GEN McChrystal's fact-finding visit immediately after the attack and only raised concerns about the inclusion of the embedded Washington Post journalist on his team. Jung said Germany was prepared to accept responsibility for whatever the investigations concluded, but reiterated his belief that the PRT Kunduz commander had acted prudently in ordering the air strikes against the fuel tankers, given the threat they posed to German forces. Jung clearly felt justified in this judgment by the reaction of local Afghan officials, all of whom, he claimed, supported the attack and agreed that only Taliban and their supporters had been killed. Regarding the joint Merkel-Brown-Sarkozy proposal for an Afghanistan conference, Jung said that it was not absolutely necessary, from the German point of view, to hold it by the end of the year. At the same time, Jung pointed out that holding the conference by year's end would help justify additional Germany military contributions to ISAF when the parliamentary mandate comes up for renewal in December. END SUMMARY.

KUNDUZ AIR STRIKES

[1](#)2. (C) Defense Minister Jung betrayed no hard feelings or irritation regarding the controversy surrounding the September 4 air strikes ordered by the German PRT Kunduz commander against two hijacked fuel tankers (ref A). In fact, Jung went out of his way to emphasize that the incident should not be allowed to disrupt the fundamentally excellent bilateral relationship. He noted that he and COMISAF GEN McChrystal had spoken by phone on September 6 to discuss COMISAF's visit to Kunduz. He said that Bundeswehr Inspector General Schneiderhan and CJCS Admiral Mullen had also spoken about the incident. Jung said it was perfectly understandable why GEN McChrystal had wanted to make a fact-finding visit to the site immediately after the attack. The only element that "raised difficult questions" was the decision to have a Washington Post journalist embedded in COMISAF's traveling party and to allow the journalist to report sensitive allegations and assertions before they could be verified.

[1](#)3. (C) Jung confirmed his strong support for GEN McChrystal's "comprehensive approach" to counterinsurgency operations, as

well as his emphasis on reducing civilian casualties. Jung said the German government was prepared to accept responsibility and take appropriate action if the verdict of the various investigatory committees was that innocent civilians had been killed in the September 4 air strikes. At the same time, he reiterated his belief that the PRT Kunduz commander had acted prudently in ordering the air strikes against the hijacked fuel tankers, given the many reports about insurgents planning a spectacular attack against the Bundeswehr in an effort to affect the results of the September 27 Bundestag election. Jung also reported that there was a consensus among the top Afghan officials in Kunduz -- including the governor, head of the Provincial Council, chief of police, commander of the local Afghan National Army (ANA) unit and the provincial director of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) -- that all of those killed (56) or wounded (12) in the attack were either "Taliban or their allies." He claimed that the atmosphere among the local populace in Kunduz in the wake of the attack was positive, with most supporting the German action.

CONFERENCE

¶4. (C) Regarding the joint Merkel-Brown-Sarkozy proposal for an Afghanistan conference, Jung said it was not absolutely necessary for it to be held by the end of year, as the leaders had suggested. He acknowledged that this could be difficult. He said that the advantage of holding the conference this year, from the German point of view, is that it would make it easier to justify higher German military and civilian contributions when the parliamentary mandate comes

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up for renewal in December.

¶5. (C) He emphasized the need for the conference, no matter when it is held, to set "common goals" for the stand-up and training of the Afghan National Army and Police (including desired end strengths) and to decide "what each of us will do" to help achieve those goals within specified time lines. He noted that he has said publicly that the Bundeswehr will probably need to remain in Afghanistan for another 5 to 10 years before Afghanistan can provide for its own security. He would happy if it were shorter than that. He thought, however, that Canadian and Dutch plans to withdraw in 2011 would probably prove to be too early.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Jung seems genuinely committed to ensuring that the controversy over the September 4 air strikes does not cause any rifts in the bilateral relationship. In fact, the MOD issued a press release immediately after the meeting stressing this point. At the same time, Jung continues to believe that the PRT Kunduz commander acted appropriately in ordering the attack, given the threat presented by the hijacked fuel tankers, and that the air strikes did not irresponsibly endanger local civilians. He has been clearly buoyed in this judgment by the positive reaction from local Afghan officials in Kunduz, as has also been reported by Embassy Kabul (ref B).
Murphy